

WRITEBOSTON

Volume 1, Issue 2

April/May 2003

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Author series | 2 |
| Odyssey at Leverett Pond | 3 |
| BCLA field trips | 3 |
| McCormack parent involvement | 3 |
| Summer Opportunities | 4 |

WriteBoston Sponsors

- City of Boston, Mayor's Office
- The Boston Foundation
- The Boston Globe Foundation
- Houghton Mifflin
- Nellie Mae
Education Foundation
- Ruth Nelson Family Foundation
- Minnie Parker Charitable Trust
- The Starbucks Foundation

McCormack and Sovereign Electronic Pen Pal Project is a great success

WriteBoston's first Pen Pal Project began in January. At McCormack Middle School, Jan Mattimoe's 8th grade science class (8B), Sovereign Bank volunteers, and the staff of WriteBoston have teamed up to start the WriteBoston Electronic Pen Pal Project.

Students join WriteBoston staff weekly in the library to correspond with their pen pals at Sovereign Bank. Thanks to the unwavering support of Richard Bausemer, Sovereign Bank Senior Compliance Manager, almost 30 volunteers were recruited to write to McCormack 8th graders. The goals for all concerned are to increase the volume of student writing, improve attitudes about writing and improve writing proficiency. Students are taught the importance of strong writing skills within the work place, how to correspond in a professional manner and how to write thoughtfully and critically. Sovereign pen pals are asked to respond to their student pen pal by asking thought provoking questions about the science topic or unit the students are studying.

When students head to the library, it is clear they are eager to read the emails they have received. They work closely with the WriteBoston staff to fine tune and edit their responses, and once the "send" button is hit, they ask on a daily basis if their pen pal has written back. An end of the year event is being planned, so the 8th graders will be able to meet their Sovereign pen pal and share their final science writing project, a science fiction short story. It is clear that this collaboration between the school and a community business has been successful on many levels: the connection between science, the work environment and writing has been bridged and fostered.

News Briefs

WriteBoston thanks the editors of **Dorchester Community News**, **SouthBostonOnline** and **Jamaica Plain Gazette** for printing stories about WriteBoston and student work. It is your willingness to publish student work that encourages and creates a culture of writing for young people in our communities.

The Starbucks Foundation has awarded WriteBoston \$5,000 to promote and hold a poetry slam at Starbucks Coffee Company on Stuart Street in Boston. Boston Community Leadership Academy will host a local poet, who will work with students to write poems for the poetry slam. Date: TBA

Houghton Mifflin Company continues to be a supporter of WriteBoston and our partner schools. This spring, each WriteBoston school received Spanish/English dictionaries to add to the school and classroom libraries. Houghton Mifflin also donated several boxes of office supplies that WriteBoston appreciates and will put to good use.

WriteBoston will hold a professional development institute in August 2003 for Boston Public School teachers who partner with WriteBoston. **The Boston Globe Foundation** has agreed to host this event, providing tours, guest speakers and space for WriteBoston staff and teachers.

WRITING TIPS • WRITING TIPS • WRITING TIPS

- Create a family tree or document family history.
- Start a journal of insightful quotes or proverbs that inform you.
e. g. "Pick your friends like you pick your fruit." -Badu
- Write to the editor of your favorite magazine about a story you liked or disliked.
- Draft your resume, mission statement or personal essay for your college applications.
- Write to your local representative about a community issue of concern.

Writers Talking With Writers

WriteBoston inspires future authors with speakers series



Edith Pearlman and future BCLA short story writers

This spring, WriteBoston teachers and students have been rewarded with a series of authors ranging from short story to magazine editors to experts on epic poetry. Published authors from **PEN New England** inspire students to explore their ideas through writing, and they help WriteBoston teachers see the power of developing a culture of writing within the classroom. Visiting authors are incorporated into existing curricula and courses of study. These special guests discuss careers in writing, the writing process, the world of publishing, and the importance of writing as a creative means of expression.

o **Epic poem and Greek experts Fred Marchant and George Kalogeris** assisted freshmen in Ms. McDade's classes at BCLA with their understanding of Homer's *The Odyssey*. Marchant and Kalogeris, both poets, writers, and professors, discussed the importance of reading texts from ancient cultures. The discussion helped students understand the connections among their own writing and the writings of the past.

o Eighth graders at the **McCormack** were journalists for a day when **author and journalist Kim McLarin** led them through a writing activity on February 28. McLarin, author of novels *Taming it*

Down and Meeting at the Waters and the biography *Growing Up X*, worked as a journalist around the world for many years. After describing her experiences in Liberia during a civil uprising, McLarin gave students the facts and instructed them to write a lead, or a short, clear introduction to a news story. Students enjoyed discussing writing and journalism as a career with McLarin.

o To help students begin to write personal narratives, WriteBoston brought **writer Sven Birkerts** to two senior classes at BCLA on March 28. Birkerts' own memoir, *My Sky Blue Trades*, was the focus of the discussion. Students asked Birkerts about his writing style, his reason for writing his memoir, and how his memoir has shaped his current relationship with his family. Birkerts also led students in a remembering and writing activity that helped seniors generate topics suitable for their personal narrative. His writing prompts helped students focus on an earlier time in their childhoods and then examine those moments to see what made them memorable.

o To further expose **Odyssey** students at South Boston to effective science writers, WriteBoston collaborated with the **Charles River Conservancy** to bring **Karl Haglund** to the school on April 2 to explain his writing and research practices. Haglund met with a large group of students to discuss the Charles River and its impact on the history and development of Boston. Haglund showed a wide array of slides, including maps, sketches, and photographs. Haglund's impressive book *Inventing the Charles River* was donated to the Odyssey students by the Charles River Con-

servancy, and Odyssey teachers and the WriteBoston writing coach have already incorporated the maps and writings into their lesson plans.

o **Edith Pearlman** has been a writer for 35 years, and has published over 100 short stories and over 100 non-fiction pieces. Before her visit with BCLA juniors in April, Pearlman provided copies of her short story "Binocular Vision," previously published in the Sunday *Boston Globe Magazine*. Students read the story and completed questions to analyze character and thematic elements. After Pearlman's visit, these students will soon write their own short stories in a writer's workshop cycle.

o **Poet and Boston Globe columnist Ellen Steinbaum** visited BCLA classrooms of freshmen and sophomores in April as part of National Poetry Month. Steinbaum led two classes of students in a poetry activity that generated some poetry reflecting the students' concerns and fears about current events in Iraq. In addition to helping students write about their feelings of the world, the poems may be submitted to the school's first literary magazine.

WriteBoston anticipates the continuation of this special relationship with authors and other professionals who use writing in their professional and personal lives.



Sven Birkerts discusses memoirs with seniors.

Boston Community Leadership Academy students take exciting field trips

Emerson College radio station, WERS: Students in Mangai Arumugam's sophomore class are soon to start their own radio station. The WERS station tour taught the students about music programming, news writing, and the tools necessary to create a popular radio show. Supported by a grant written by Ms. Arumugam, the radio station will be run by students and will include music and school news updates. The WriteBoston Writing Coach helped students design a survey to determine students' musical interests, a business letter project to ask radio stations for donations and advice, and a music programming activity to help students become successful disc jockeys on air.

Museum of Fine Art: Lauren McDade's ninth graders began a unit on Homer's *The Odyssey* with two special events: A classical gallery tour of the Museum of Fine Arts, and two guest speakers offering their expertise about *The Odyssey* and why students should read it today. PEN New England authors and professors Fred Marchant and George Kalogeris spoke with students about Greek culture and mythology, making references to the Trojan War and the recent events in Iraq. Both the field trip and author visit helped students make connections between writing and culture.



10th grade students in the Lobby of the WERS studio pose with their teacher Ms. Arumugam, far left.

Leverett Pond activities documented by Odyssey students

Carl Johnson's 11th grade WriteBoston students visit Leverett Pond in Brookline bi-weekly to do field site research. Members of this Environmental Science class take turns both visiting the pond and using the scientific equipment for water testing and the video camera; they have been compiling data on birds, geese and their nesting habits, and the quality of the water of Leverett Pond itself. They are required to write up their field site reports after each trip, and have made great strides in including detail on the results of the testing, developing their own "voices," and simply getting more on the page. They work with their WriteBoston coach after each visit to talk about what might be included and what needs to be revised.

Original student journal entry by Krista O'Toole: Today on 4/14/03 we once again visited Leverett Pond. It was a really nice day out, although when we walked down towards the water to begin the testing, the weather seemed to feel colder. The water looked really dark, so I'm guessing it was just really dirty.

For the first time, I saw there were two men going around in a green truck emptying the trash cans. I did not see any cops today but Chris had said he saw a cop car and also a park ranger.

Today we saw seven dogs, two babies, a dead fish, a dead, run-over squirrel, six nests, one raccoon, two turtles and a whole lot of birds.

Our water results for the day: Water temp = 10 C; Air temp = 7 C; Ph = 6.5; D.O. = 9 p.p.m.; Salinity = .8 g/l

It was a nice trip today. We had seven students this time and we were right on time going and coming back. There was a new technique in how to test salinity. It took us about 2 to 3, not even 5 minutes to test it. A lot of our testing equipment was cracked so Mish took it with her to replace it for Thursday when we go next.

McCormack parents engage in teen identity development and MCAS writing support

On April 2, author and Harvard Professor Janie V. Ward talked with parents and staff at an annual open house about the importance or supporting the racial identity of students. Ward's book *The Skin We're In*, is written for parents and discusses the need to teach African American teens to be emotionally smart, socially strong and spiritually connected. The conversation ranged from the topic of youth "acting cool" to administration making school a safe place. Everyone involved reported that it was informative and insightful conversation.



Ward talks about the social development of middle school children.

•McCormack's WriteBoston Writing Coach collaborated with the school parent liaison, Luz Maldonado, to present parents with a **workshop on MCAS**. This workshop not only included the dates for testing this spring and information about emotional support for children, it also included strategies and information about how parents could encourage and support students in their attempts to be successful on the writing parts of the tests.

WRITING TIPS • WRITING TIPS

- Journal your child's progress, special events, and things he/she says or does that amaze you.



**2201 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
Phone: 617-541-2616
Fax: 617-541-2660
Email: www.writeboston.org**

**“Either write
something worth reading
or do something worth writing.”**

-Benjamin Franklin

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

**WE ARE ON THE WEB
WWW.WRITEBOSTON.ORG**

Explore Boston Through Writing this Summer

WriteBoston is holding a one week summer writing institute that will expose students to a multitude of writing genres, while traveling to different parts of the city each day. The 5 trips include: the Boston Globe, Fenway Park, City Hall, George's Island and Harvard University. While traveling around the city, students will create their own writing pieces in the journals provided to them. Students will meet local authors, interview the Mayor, and hear from the professor who started WriteBoston.

If you are looking for something fun to do for the first full week of summer vacation and think that you have any interest in writing or developing your writing skills, please apply!

Applications are still being accepted. **Current 8th and 9th graders at McCormack, BCLA and Odyssey are eligible to apply.** Please contact WriteBoston at 617-541-2604 or ask your WriteBoston Writing Coach at your school.

Paid Summer Journalism Internship

In honor of journalist and author Caroline Knapp, the Hiatt Family is sponsoring paid internships at the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald and the Boston Phoenix newspapers. Arnold Hiatt, Caroline's uncle, has created this opportunity for students to develop their journalism skills and perhaps launch them on a path to journalism careers.

WriteBoston will work closely with each newspaper to develop its internship program. A mentor to the interns will give them coaching and guidance over the eight week internship. Students will learn how a newsroom operates, assist with reporting on a story and writing for a publication, and job shadow newspaper staff.

Students completing their junior year at Boston Community Leadership Academy, Odyssey High and English High applied for these internships. The following three students were selected for the internships: **Alejandra Morel of BCLA, Clara Semervil and Patricia Gilmore, both of English High.**